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# Editorial Authentic reporting

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THE NATURE of audiences in both Australia and New Zealand is ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse. Yet the mainstream media largely does not reflect this diversity. In the case of Australia, diversity reportage relating to Arabs and Muslim people is frequently neglected or characterised by stereotypes, as outlined by Nasya Bahfen and Alexandra Wake on page 93. In New Zealand, while the Indigenous tangata whenua media (such as the increasingly popular and innovative Māori Television, which acts as the nation's de facto public broadcaster) and Pacific media continue to carve growing niches, other ethnic communities too often remain marginalised.

Last November, a stream of the annual Journalism Education Association in Australia (JEAA) conference at the University of Technology, Sydney, was devoted to cultural, diversity and community media themes. This edition of *Pacific Journalism Review* has dedicated its cover to 'Media, cultural diversity and community' by selecting several peer-reviewed articles from the conference offerings. These have been augmented by a range of other articles around the theme such as community media and filmmaking in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, the paucity of Māori issues coverage in local newspapers in one of the subsidiaries of New Zealand's dominant Australian-owned Fairfax Media group, and a revealing debate about a contested New Zealand university communication studies custom-designed programme for Oman.

The media mandate to pursue social justice applies to all, not some, of our community, argues Professor Arlene Notoro Morgan, who developed the 'authentic voice' diversity reporting project at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York. She wrote:

When people see their lives or people like themselves in our journalism, they're more likely to believe we're credible or, in other words, authentic. (Morgan, 2006, p. xii)

In addition, this issue of *PJR* is publishing two major independent special reports—one on Pacific media freedom with an inventory and status report for the past year. Stunning reading, especially when it comes to examining the traumatic recent events of West Papua.

But the edition opens with an article evaluating the effectiveness of the Reporting Diversity Project in Australia [www.reportingdiversity.org.au](http://www.reportingdiversity.org.au)—sponsored by the multicultural broadcaster SBS. This project has provided teaching materials on reporting cultural diversity for journalism educators and university students. Researchers **Kristy Hess** and **Lisa Waller** also deploy a survey used to ‘capture’ journalism academics’ views on government-funded resources at the website.

Filmmaker **Verena Thomas** explores the *Yumi Piksa* project in Papua New Guinea, a collaborative application of media and arts-based research practices involving students from the University of Goroka in the Eastern Highlands. The innovative project draws on a rich cultural visual heritage in the country and highlights giving voice to Indigenous local groups, without privileging production quality. Short films featured include *Mama Blong Down Under*, *Nakondi’s Morning Call* and *Levekuka Clay*.

In a New Zealand project by the Te Rōpu Whariki Research Group of Massey University, **Jenny Rankine**, **Angela Moewaka Barnes**, **Belinda Borrell**, **Tim McCreanor**, **Ray Nairn** and **Amanda Gregory** found a low use of te reo Māori by Fairfax-owned Suburban Newspapers. It also found ‘no signs of attempts’ to support readers in learning the language and concluded that both Māori and non-Māori readers were ‘poorly served by the poverty of ... reporting Treaty [of Waitangi] and Māori issues by Suburban Newspapers’, which publishes 17 titles across the Auckland and Northland regions.

Australian country non-daily newspapers are generally highly local in their emphasis. They are not only a valuable source of local news and information for their readership, but also help to connect people with their circulation area and reinforce community. A case study by **Kathryn Bowd** examined four country newspapers published at least weekly in townships of fewer than 15,000 people. All supported three elements of ‘social capital’—social network, rules and expectations, and sanctions.

Journalism students at RMIT in Melbourne completed two newsroom production sessions for a major radio station as part of their assessment in a semester-long subject. Researchers **Nasya Bahfen** and **Alexandra Wake** examined the students’ choice of interviewees in stories on Islamic issues over a six-week broadcast period during 2010. Their data will form a baseline for monitoring diversity reporting in future in the context of a small-scale Islamic public sphere in Australia.

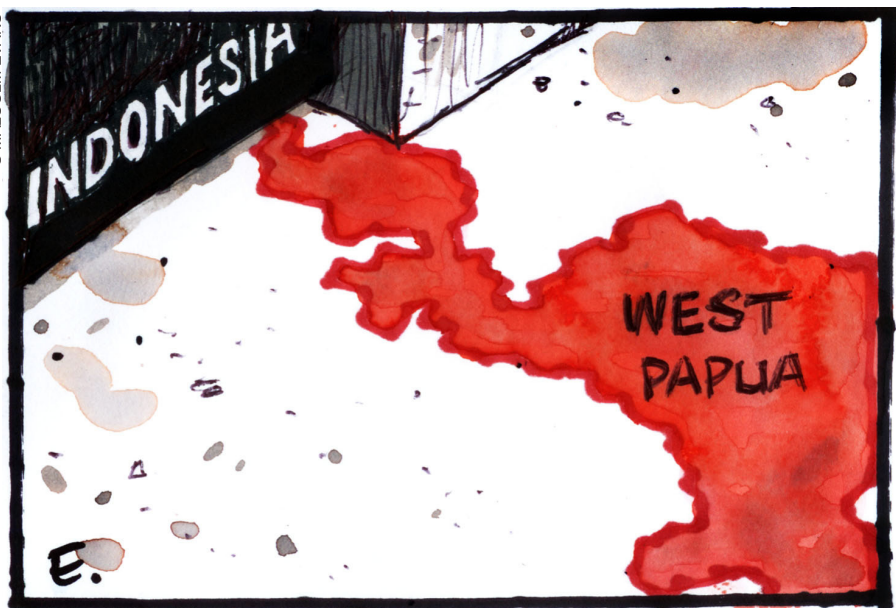
Between 2005-2011, the New Zealand Tertiary Education Consortium was contracted to the Ministry of Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman. This contract committed four NZ universities to provide degrees in four discipline areas. As part of this process, AUT University's Bachelor of Communication Studies was redeveloped for local delivery in Oman. **Susan O'Rourke** presents a case study on the cultural and educational challenges of the Journalism major. In the following article, **Philip Cass** questions the viability of teaching 'Western-style' journalism in Middle East institutions and examines some specific challenges faced in the Omani programme. He concludes: 'It could be argued that journalism education should match the needs of countries in which it is taught.' He adds that some colleagues would argue for a more 'developmental model' being taught.

This is the final culture and community article in the themed part of the edition and leads into two major special reports.

Pacific media freedom has been under siege for more than a decade—particularly since an attempted coup in Fiji in May 2000, when a Suva television station was attacked and ransacked, a foreign journalist was shot and wounded and a local journalism trainer ended up being imprisoned on a charge of treason. Censorship still remains in force in Fiji since being imposed in April 2009 by the military backed regime that seized power in December 2006. Other Pacific countries, such as Vanuatu, have also faced assaults on media freedom.

However, by far the most serious case of media freedom violations in the Pacific is in Indonesian-ruled West Papua—far from international scrutiny. **Alex Perrottet** and **David Robie** have compiled a special research report on the state of media freedom in the Pacific in 2011 and noted that in August, in particular, 'sustained repression has also hit the news media and journalists'. At least two journalists have been killed in West Papua, five others abducted and 18 assaulted in the past year. The emphasis on West Papua in this article is continued in a feature film review of *Strange Birds in Paradise* by West Papua Media editor Nick Chesterfield who notes:

With innovative storytelling methods unseen in documentaries, Charlie Hill-Smith explores differing experiences and perspectives of the Indonesian colonial occupation in Papua, from those of everyday people, musicians, artists, academics, freedom fighters, refugees, activists, and telling the stories of those who resist and martyred themselves to protect



the survival of one of the oldest, most linguistically diverse cultures, custodians of an earthly paradise. (p. 223)

As Chesterfield observes, West Papua is a place that is still off limits to foreign journalists and human rights observers, ‘with Jakarta sharing a dubious honour with Syria and other dictatorships as among a few countries that ban independent verification of abuse’ (p. 223). The film draws on the martyrdom of pioneering Papuan ethnomusicologist Arnold Ap—arrested in 1983 and executed extrajudicially for recording traditional songs—and shows how music can rise above tyranny.

In New Zealand, a major threat to media freedom has been the consolidation of contemporary transnational corporate ownership patterns. As **Merja Myllylahti** and **Wayne Hope** demonstrate in another special report on global capital and media communication ownership, New Zealand media corporations treat news as a commodity and news organisations as revenue generators. This is the third in a series of media ownership papers published in *PJR* and initiated by **Bill Rosenberg’s** mapping of media ownership (2007, 2009). This project has now been adopted by AUT University. The report authors point to the closure of the 20-year-old influential business and politics newspaper *The*

*Independent* and phasing out of the 130-year-old cooperative news agency New Zealand Press Association (NZPA) among symptoms of the malaise: ‘Consequently, public media space is shrinking as the practice of journalism declines.’

WHILE *Pacific Journalism Review* is readily available on three international databases with a fourth to be added, and libraries (see details on the imprint, page 2), the editors have sought to make the journal more readily available in Pacific island nations. For this reason (among others), the *PJR* website is being developed as a more user-friendly media resource and research repository on a Drupal platform. Watch for the relaunched site with an unchanged web address.

[www.pjreview.info](http://www.pjreview.info)

*Associate Professor David Robie*

*Pacific Media Centre*

*AUT University*

[www.pmc.aut.ac.nz](http://www.pmc.aut.ac.nz)

*Edition co-editors: Professor Wendy Bacon and Dr Catriona Bonfiglioli*

*University of Technology, Sydney*

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